

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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R 111127Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4549

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY MANILA

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

S E C R E T SINGAPORE 0696

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, SN, TW

SUBJ: LEE KWAN YEW VISIT TO TAIWAN AND INCREASED ROC TRAINING
OF SAF

REF: DAO MESSAGE, DTG 170613Z JAN

1. SUMMARY AND COMMENT. TAIWAN TRADE COMMISSIONER, PETER CHANG, HAS INFORMED EMBASSY THAT PREMIER CHIANG CHING-KUO ACCOMPANIED PRIME MINISTER LEE FOR ALMOST TWO DAYS DURING HIS RECENT PRIVATE VISIT TO SOME OF TAIWAN'S SCENIC AREAS. CHANG SAID ROC HAS AGREED THAT THE NUMBER OF SINGAPORE BATTALIONS TO BE TRAINED IN TAIWAN IN 1976 WILL BE APPROXIMATELY DOUBLE THE NUMBER TRAINED IN 1975 -- PRINCIPALLY IN ARMOR, COMMANDO AND ARTILLERY TRAINING. SINCE GOS SENT 10 BATTALIONS TO TAIWAN LAST YEAR, THIS WOULD MEAN THAT AS MANY AS 20 BATTALIONS COULD BE SENT TO TAIWAN FOR TRAINING IN 1976. MINDEF IS ENDEAVORING TO PURCHASE THREE LST'S FROM THE U.S. AND CONTINUES TO URGE U.S. TO SELL C-130'S TO BE USED IN PART TO TRANSPORT TROOPS TO TAIWAN FOR TRAINING. DAO

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BELIEVES SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES WILL HAVE ADMINISTRATIVE

AND LOGISTICAL PROBLEMS IN SENDING AS MANY AS 20 BATTALIONS TO TAIWAN FOR TRAINING, BUT WILL BE ABLE TO INCREASE GREATLY THE NUMBER SENT IN 1976. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

2. TAIWAN'S UNAFFOCIAL TRADE COMMISSIONER IN SINGAPORE, PETER CHANG (WHO IS AN EXCEPTIONALLY ASTUTE OFFICER IN THE ROC FOREIGN SERVICE), MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS TO DCM FEBRUARY 10 RE P.M. LEE'S RECENT VISIT TO TAIWAN. HE SAID TRIP WAS PURELY PRIVATE VISIT TACKED ON TO LEE'S OFFICIAL VISIT TO BANGKOK AND HONG KONG AND THAT LEE HAD PLAYED THE ROLE OF A TOURIST VISITING SOME OF TAIWAN'S MOST SCENIC AREAS -- SPECIFICALLY TO ENJOY THE COOLER WEATHER IN THE MOUNTAINS. HE HAD ALSO PAID HIS RESPECTS AT THE TOMB OF FORMER PREMIER CHIANG KAI-SHEK, WHICH WAS A MOST APPRECIATED GESTURE. CHANG SAID PREMIER CHIANG CHING-KUO ACCOMPANIED LEE DURING MUCH OF HIS TRAVEL IN TAIWAN AND THERE HAD BEEN AMPLE OPPORTUNITY FOR EXTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS. CHIANG PROFESSED NOT TO KNOW THE SUBSTANCE OF THESE DISCUSSIONS BUT INDICATED THAT LEE USED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS HIS GRATITUDE FOR TAIWAN'S WILLINGNESS TO INCREASE ITS TRAINING OF SINGAPORE ARMED FORCES.

3. CHANG SAID THAT THE ROC PILOTS HAD FINISHED THEIR TRAINING MISSION IN SINGAPORE AND WERE GOING BACK HOME. HOWEVER, HE SAID THE ROC AND GOS HAD RECENTLY AGREED (JUST PRIOR TO LEE'S VISIT TO TAIWAN) TO INCREASE GREATLY THE NUMBER OF SAF TROOPS TO BE TRAINED IN TAIWAN IN 1976. HE ESTIMATED THE NUMBER WOULD BE ABOUT DOUBLE THOSE TRAINED IN 1975. (ACCORDING DAO INFO, APPROXIMATELY 10 SINGAPORE BATTALIONS WERE SENT TO TAIWAN FOR TRAINING IN 1975). CHANG SAID THAT UNDER THIS ARRANGEMENT SINGAPORE WOULD PROVIDE OR PAY FOR THE EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING AND STORES AND AMMUNITION USED BUT THAT THE ROC WOULD PROVIDE FREE-OF-CHARGE THE ACTUAL SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR TRAINING. CHANG SAID TRAINING OF SUCH A LARGE NUMBER OF SINGAPORE TROOPS IN TAIWAN WOULD ACTUALLY INHIBIT ROC FORCES OWN TRAINING PROGRAM IN SOME DEGREE.

4. CHANG COMMENTED THAT GOS WAS PARTICULARLY APPRECIATIVE OF THIS TRAINING (A) IN VIEW OF LACK OF SPACE IN SINGAPORE TO CONDUCT SUCH TRAINING (B) THE LACK OF ANY SERIOUS LINGUISTIC DIFFICULTIES IN CONDUCTING THE TRAINING AND (C) THE INCREASED TOUGHNESS AND GREATER MORALE WHICH THE SINGAPORE TROOPS GAIN

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UNDER THE TRAINING. WITH RESPECT TO THE LAST POINT, HE NOTED THAT SINGAPORE TROOPS ARE THE PRODUCT OF A MORE AFFLUENT SOCIETY AND ARE SOFTER AND MUCH BETTER PAID THAN ROC TROOPS. WHEN SINGAPORE SOLDIERS WENT TO TAIWAN THEY WERE EXPOSED TO TOUGHER AND LESS WELL-PAID ROC TROOPS WHO NONETHELESS ENJOYED A VERY HIGH MORALE. THE PERIOD OF TRAINING RECEIVED IN TAIWAN HAD A TONIC EFFECT ON SINGAPORE TROOPS. THIS WAS GREATLY APPRECIATED BY SINGAPORE LEADERS.

5. COMMENTING ON THE ORIGIN OF ROC TRAINING OF SINGAPORE FORCES, CHANG SAID IT HAD ITS GENESIS IN 1968 WHEN THE GOS FIRST BROACHED THIS SUBJECT TO THE ROC. HOWEVER, AT THAT TIME THE ROC SAID IT WOULD PROVIDE ASSISTANCE ONLY IF THE GOS AGREED TO SUPPORT THE ROC ON THE CHIREP ISSUE IN THE UN. THE GOS WAS UNWILLING TO DO SO. HOWEVER, WHEN THE ROC WAS OUSTED FROM THE UN IN 1971 THIS OBSTACLE WAS REMOVED AND THE WAY WAS PAVED FOR SENDING ROC PILOTS AND OTHER TRAINERS TO SINGAPORE IN CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS.

6. CHANG WAS UNCERTAIN HOW PRC VIEWED ROC TRAINING OF SINGAPORE FORCES. HOWEVER, HE SAID FOREIGN MINISTER RAJARATNAM IN HIS VISIT TO PEKING LAST YEAR HAD BEEN VERY ASTUTE TO INITIATE HIS DISCUSSIONS WITH CHIAO KUAN-HUA BY STATING FLATLY THAT SINGAPORE WAS STRONGLY ANTI-COMMUNIST AND ADMITTING IT RECEIVES SIGNIFICANT TRAINING SUPPORT FROM TAIWAN. HE THOUGHT THIS FRANKNESS HAD SOMEWHAT DISARMED CHIAO WHO REPORTEDLY DID NOT MENTION THE TAIWAN CONNECTION DURING THE REMAINDER OF RAJA'S VISIT.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: WOULD APPRECIATE ANY LIGHT EMBASSY TAIWAN CAN SHED ON NATURE OF CHIANG CHING-KUO/LEE KUAN YEW DISCUSSIONS. HOLDRIDGE

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